

STATE SENATOR • JIM BARCIA • 31ST DISTRICT
Barcia Press Release

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**BARCIA'S BEACH MAINTENANCE BILL TAKEN UP BY
SENATE COMMITTEE**

(LANSING)- State Senator Jim Barcia (D-Bay City) testified today in front of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs in support of Senate Bill 244, his bill to ease beachfront maintenance regulations for Michigan's shoreline property owners. The legislation, co-sponsored by a bi-partisan group of 13 senators is similar to House Bill 4257, sponsored by Rep. Brian Palmer (R-Romeo), which passed the House last month. Senator Barcia also supports HB 4257.

"I introduced SB 244 because I believe it is a reasonable attempt to balance the rights and responsibilities of shoreline property owners with the legitimate oversight duties of our regulatory agencies," said Barcia. "With water levels falling off in recent years and millions of gallons of raw sewage being pumped into our waterways every time it rains, our beaches are being overrun with tremendous amounts of invasive vegetation growth, and pools of standing water that are a breeding ground for bacteria, mosquitoes and the West Nile Virus."

SB 244 would allow riparian property owners to manually or mechanically level and groom the top four inches of sand between the ordinary high water mark and the water's edge.

“The purpose of this legislation is to provide some relief to those that reside along the shoreline and to protect the public health of everyone who enjoys Michigan’s beaches. I believe it achieves a common sense balance between property rights, public health, economic growth and environmental sensitivity, and would respectfully ask for the committee’s support of this legislation”, said Barcia.

The Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, chaired by Senator Patricia Birkholz (R-Saugatuck), took testimony on both SB 244 and HB 4257 today and is expected to vote on one or both bills next week.

State Senator Jim Barcia represents the 31st Senate District, which includes Arenac, Bay, Huron, Sanilac, and Tuscola counties. He is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, where he serves as Vice-Chair of the subcommittees on Agriculture, Environmental Quality, Natural Resources, and Transportation.

Editor’s note: For a full transcript of Senator Barcia’s testimony, please see below.

“I INTRODUCED SENATE BILL 244 BECAUSE I BELIEVE IT IS A REASONABLE ATTEMPT TO BALANCE THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHORELINE PROPERTY OWNERS WITH THE LEGITIMATE OVERSIGHT DUTIES OF OUR REGULATORY AGENCIES. THE BILL WOULD ALLOW PROPERTY OWNERS TO MANUALLY OR MECHANICALLY LEVEL AND GROOM THE TOP FOUR INCHES OF SAND BETWEEN THE ORDINARY HIGH WATER MARK AND THE WATER’S EDGE. WITH WATER LEVELS FALLING IN RECENT YEARS AND MILLIONS OF GALLONS OF RAW SEWAGE BEING PUMPED INTO WATERWAYS EVERY TIME IT RAINS, OUR BEACHES ARE BEING OVERRUN WITH TREMENDOUS AMOUNTS OF INVASIVE

VEGETATION GROWTH, AND POOLS OF STANDING WATER THAT ARE A BREEDING GROUND FOR BACTERIA, MOSQUITOES AND THE WEST NILE VIRUS.

TODAY'S DETROIT FREE PRESS CARRIED TWO ARTICLES ON THE EFFECTS AND DANGERS OF THE WEST NILE VIRUS. AND RECENTLY, I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM A CONSTITUENT WHOSE NEPHEW CONTRACTED THE WEST NILE VIRUS AFTER SPENDING THE SUMMER ON THE BEACH NEAR HIS HOME. HIS MEDICAL BILLS HAVE ALREADY EXCEEDED \$500,000-AND HE IS STILL RECOVERING.

WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHERE AND WHEN SOMEONE CONTRACTS THIS DISEASE, THE FREE PRESS ARTICLE IS INSTRUCTIVE IN ITS SUGGESTIONS FOR AVOIDING CONTACT WITH IT.

“IF YOU PLAN TO BE IN AN AREA FULL OF TALL GRASS, WEEDS OR BUSHES – DAY OR NIGHT – WEAR LONG PANTS AND LONG SLEEVES.”

THESE ARE EXACTLY THE CONDITIONS WE ARE SEEING ON OUR BEACHES, AND I BELIEVE IT IS IRRESPONSIBLE TO IGNORE OR DISMISS THIS THREAT. THIS LEGISLATION ACHIEVES A COMMON SENSE BALANCE BETWEEN PROPERTY RIGHTS, PUBLIC HEALTH, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY. CLEAN, SAFE BEACHES ARE NOT ONLY GOOD FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT, THEY ARE CRITICAL TO MICHIGAN'S ECONOMY. I WOULD RESPECTFULLY ASK FOR THE COMMITTEE'S SUPPORT OF THIS LEGISLATION. THANK YOU.”

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